

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Teaching Behavioral Health: The Experiences of Athletic Training

Preceptors within Clinical Higher Education

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The recent emphasis on the inclusion of behavioral health in professional athletic training education has revealed a gap in the literature relating to how to teach students about this important topic. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, I sought to explore how athletic training preceptors teach professional athletic training students concepts of behavioral health during clinical education. Exploring the current reality and experiences of preceptors relating to behavioral health will help other researchers begin to fill this gap in literature. The following research questions guided this study: (1) what are the experiences of preceptors?; (2) what are the barriers to including students in patient interactions?; and (3) what are the needs of preceptors? Purposive sampling required reaching out to program directors of professional graduate athletic training programs with a request to forward the research invitation to preceptors. Preceptors were interviewed via Zoom using a semi-structured interview guide, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed following steps specific to a phenomenological approach to research and used evaluative criteria to ensure trustworthiness. Five themes resulted from the analysis: Teaching Methods, Learning Environment, Deciding Factors for Including AT Students, Managing Behavioral Health, and Preceptor Needs. Athletic training preceptors

possess the skills to teach students about behavioral health with additional resources, support, and education. The findings suggest that faculty within professional healthcare education programs should re-evaluate their curriculum relative to the role of preceptors focus on teaching behavioral health to ensure they are receiving what they need to educate students effectively.

Keywords: Health professions education, Mental health, Higher education curriculum, Compassionate care, Phenomenological research